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SUBJECT: CLAN FIGHTING: EQUATEUR PROVINCE REMAINS TENSE

REF: KINSHASA 997

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1. Summary: Dongo, the sleepy Ubangui river town that was the scene of recent fighting between the rival Enyele and Manzaya clans, is calm, but completely deserted. A small detachment of MONUC's Ghanaian force is in Dongo, along with 300 Congolese Rapid Intervention Police (PIR) elements. The number of dead is uncertain, but the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 100 people could have been killed in the violence. UNHCR estimates that around 37,000 residents have fled across the river into the Republic of Congo, with approximately the same number of IDPs in the DRC. There has been recent fighting in Bongoma Territory, where 9,000 residents of a village reportedly fled fearing an attack. Although groups have issued communiques calling on residents to resist the DRC security forces, MONUC believes--and we agree--the fighting is clan-based and not part of a rebellion, for now. The events in the area highlight the lack of state authority throughout the DRC and the small footprint (and capacity) of MONUC to deal with serious problems outside of the East. End summary.

#### History of Enyele-Manzaya Dispute

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2. (SBU) The conflict between the Enyele and Manzaya clans of the Lobala ethnic group dates back to at least 1945-46, when the two groups began quarreling over fishing rights and profits from exports of fish across the Ubangui River to the Republic of Congo (ROC). Fishing is the only source of income in the area. In March/April 2009, the dispute reignited following the replacement of the local administrator (the central government's representative) in Dongo. Enyele elements apparently attacked Manzaya elements, claiming the Manzaya were not indigenous to the area and therefore did not have the right to engage in local commerce. Between March-September 2009, Enyele and Manzaya clashed in at least four separate incidents. MONUC sources told us that in July, Enyele fighters burned down the town of Manzaya (Note: the name of the town is also spelled "Monzaya." End note). The newly appointed administrator, a Banzaya, fled the area.

3. (SBU) In October, the deposed administrator returned with a small detachment of the Congolese National Police (PNC). Initial press reports indicated that the Enyele killed 47 policemen (reftel). MONUC told us that it could only verify that 16 policemen had been killed in Dongo, but 25 policemen were missing. Our MONUC contact opined that, while the missing policemen could be dead, it is also possible that

individuals, many of whom are highly superstitious, might have fled a much-feared witch doctor known as "General" Odjani, who led the Enyele fighters.

#### Dongo Calm, But a Ghost Town

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¶4. (SBU) Several MONUC sources told us that Dongo and a 40-kilometer radius around the town is completely deserted, with its residents having fled across to the ROC or into the surrounding bush. MONUC said that women and children had apparently preferred to flee across the river, while many men went into the forest. Although numbers are fluid, UNHCR's Kinshasa Office estimated nearly 37,000 persons have fled into the ROC, confirming information received from Embassy Brazzaville. According to MONUC, there are perhaps another 36,000 IDPs but our sources stressed this is extremely difficult to estimate.

¶5. (SBU) When the current fighting broke out, the nearest MONUC forces were 230 km away in Gemena. After failed attempts to reach the area by various means--road, river, and assessment of air movement--a small detachment of 20 Ghanaian troops from Gemena reached Dongo, where 300 policemen from the PNC's Rapid Intervention Police (PIR) unit had already arrived. NPC Second Deputy Inspector General Benjamin Alongoboni personally led the 500 PIR forces dispersed throughout the region and guided MONUC on a tour of Dongo, where bodies were "strewn all over the streets" (Comment: Alongoboni brought credibility to the operation as a native of the region, and member of the opposition Movement for the Liberation of Congo, MLC, party, which has its origins in Equateur. His selection makes it difficult for the opposition to claim human rights violations by the central government in

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opposition territory. End comment). A member of MONUC noted that the PIR had left the bodies of slain PNC on the street, perhaps in an effort to demonstrate that the PIR had not been responsible for the killings (Note: some observers were concerned that, following the initial killing of PNC troops, the PNC/PIR would respond with disproportionate force against the local population, as it did towards Bundu-dia-Kongo (BDK) supporters in Bas-Congo Province in early 2008. End note). Apparently, many residents were coerced into participating in violent acts, much as many Rwandans had been forced to do during the 1994 genocide. Recognizing this, the PIR told MONUC it would only target the leaders of the "rebellion." The PIR had arrested approximately 100 people in Dongo on various charges. MONUC said it had information that the Enyele leaders were in the Imese area, using a boat, which they stole from UNHCR in June, to wreak havoc up and down this stretch of the Ubangui.

¶6. (SBU) A team comprised of representatives from several UN bodies returned November 14 from a fact-finding mission to Dongo, Tangal, Ozene, and Kungu. A MONUC spokesman said the team could not establish an exact number of casualties. GDRC Communications Minister Lambert Mende announced that the GDRC would send a second mission to the region with "more robust" humanitarian and security elements. An OCHA spokesman said approximately 100 people had died in the violence. Dongo, according to the spokesman, had been empty since the PIR took control of it on November 7 (Note: another MONUC contact told us that it was not clear if the population had already fled Dongo before the police arrived, or if they fled fearing the arrival of the police. End note).

#### Fighting Continues

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¶7. (SBU) MONUC reported that fighting continues in the Bomongo area, as Enyele troops reportedly killed 7 Manzayas on November 17 at Sabasaba, and the Manzayas retaliated by killing five Enyeles on November 18. A provincial deputy,

Jean Faustin Mokoma (AMP), said that additional fighting occurred at Longundo, a village near Sabasaba.

¶8. (U) Radio Okapi reported that the village of Buburu in Bomongo Territory, with a population of 9,000, emptied on November 20 following a rumor that the village would be attacked. A resident told Radio Okapi that, absent any FARDC, PNC, or MONUC presence, the population fled across the river to Impfondo and into the surrounding forest. UNHCR and ICRC temporarily closed their offices in Buburu.

Call to Arms?  
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¶9. (SBU) The "Patriotic Resistance of Dongo" issued a communique on November 18 stating that DRC security forces had attacked its positions in the Dongo area. The group claimed to have access to significant numbers of arms and it announced it aimed to attack and capture Gemena. The Alliance of Patriots for the Reform of the Congo (APARECO), led by Honore Ngbanda, has also published several texts critical of the GDRC and calling on local residents to resist the FARDC and PNC interventions. It is uncertain whether these are real political associations and/or militias, or are simply taking advantage of violence in the area to draw attention to their grievances.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: We share MONUC's assessment that the fighting is for now a clan-based dispute, not a rebellion. Nevertheless, some reports suggest that the fighting could have been sparked by supporters of jailed DRC opposition leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, a native of Equateur province, who were attempting to access an arms cache. Neither UNHCR nor MONUC believe that the situation will improve enough to allow refugees and IDPs to return home in the near-term. The situation is obviously very tense, and it will be difficult to obtain reliable, up-to-date information on the military and humanitarian situation in the area as the villages are mostly reachable only by boat. We were also initially concerned that the PNC might use excessive force against the local population, but for now the PNC seems to have exercised restraint.

The sudden eruption of fighting in Equateur is a reminder that the entire DRC, not just the East, remains fragile. It also points to the lack of state authority throughout the

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country, and the possibility that well-armed groups can easily employ their strength vis-a-vis locally-based FARDC and PNC units. It is also a reminder of how important it is to forge ahead with SSR efforts. Finally, this situation may be a foretaste of things to come should MONUC remove all troops from the western part of the DRC. With the overwhelming majority of its forces already in the East, MONUC can still respond to challenges to state authority throughout the country, but cannot do so quickly and effectively. End comment.  
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